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TV Images

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The Hillbilly in the Living Room: Television Representations of Southern Mountaineers in Situation Comedies, 1952-1971

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In the mid-postwar years of the late 1950s and early 1960s, imagery and press accounts associated with the Southern mountains and their people appeared to a degree unequaled since the 1930s. These images were most prominently featured on television—the dominant medium of its age—in news reports, documentaries, and most commonly, in a steady stream of highly successful and influential situation comedies—*The Real McCoys*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, and *The Beverly Hillbillies*. In an era when television's vast reach and the three networks' near total control of the airwaves created a national "common culture" (with notable exceptions) to a degree unmatched before or since, televised images played a central role in shaping public perceptions of American society and values in general, and of the Southern mountain people in particular.

The depiction of the "hillbilly" on television offered a "domesticated" version of this familiar persona that had evolved over the course of the 20th century, one shorn of much of its surface debasement and slovenliness. Partly this sanitized hillbilly was simply a response to the strict content limitations of postwar television and to the demands of formulaic sitcoms for characters that audiences would welcome back week after week. Although then and now often easily dismissed as simply base and escapist entertainment aimed at

unsophisticated rural and small town audiences, these programs also reflected, although rarely explicitly, contemporary social concerns about Southern mountain people and conditions, and more generally, about the possibilities and limitations of postwar America. In the late 1950s, fears of hillbilly “invasions” of Midwestern cities prompted press accounts of backwards and degenerate men and women who, despite their “superior” racial heritage, threatened the comity of the industrial heartland. The early 1960s saw the rediscovery of Appalachia as a site of an endemic “pocket of poverty” in an (supposedly) otherwise affluent society. Yet as in the past, the region’s people were also held up as the inheritors of an uncorrupted “traditional” culture and value system who challenged modern urbanity and pointed out the spiritual and ethical costs of materialist “progress.” Finally, at a time when the Civil Rights Movement promoted national multiculturalism and exposed an ugly view of a racist Southern white society, these shows presented a nearly all white South and celebrated the homespun goodness of Southern whites and, by extension, America as a whole.

I. Early Television Incarnations and the Image of the Urban Hillbilly “Invader”

The earliest examples of the televised hillbilly image were mostly highly derivative representations of earlier vaudeville, radio, and film characterizations. In the 1953 episode of the NBC sitcom *My Hero* simply entitled “Hillbilly,” Robert (Bob) Cummings plays a real estate agent who gets mixed up in a formulaic Kentucky feud complete with shoot-out scenes and an amorous mountain girl named Lulubelle Hartfield. Likewise, in a 1958 episode of his program, Jack Benny portrayed his supposed Arkansas beginnings as country fiddler “Zeke Benny and his Ozark Hillbillies.” Dressed in longjohns, overalls, and a straw boater, Benny interspersed performances of pop country tunes such as “You Are My Sunshine” with comedy routines about child brides and ignorant hicks who stomp the ground like a horse as they count to four.¹

Benny’s show was one of at least four situation comedies and variety shows to use hillbilly characters and imagery between October 1957 and April 1958. The most interesting of these portrayals was on *The Bob Cummings Show* in which Cummings generally played a suave and comfortably affluent fashion photographer. In “Bob Goes Hillbilly,” however, Cummings and his sister dress as ragged, gap-toothed yokels in an effort to teach his nephew, Chuck (who is trying to impress his snobby date), a lesson about the unacceptability of social hierarchy. Laughing stupidly while milking a piglet, Cummings sends the debutante screaming from the house. In the end, Bob moralizes to Chuck and

the viewing audience that “any romance based on class distinctions doesn’t stand a chance.” “Not in a democracy like this,” pipes in his sister. The show thus discredited class divisions and upheld the widely shared belief in American “classlessness” by reinforcing long-established stereotypes of the poverty, stupidity, and slovenliness of hill folk. The writer and producer of the show was none other than Paul Henning who had a hand in nearly all the presentations of television hillbillies and would bring the image to the very heart of American culture four years later with *The Beverly Hillbillies*.²

The surge of hackneyed stereotypes in televised hillbilly images in 1957 and 1958 reflects a historical moment when national press accounts articulated long-growing tensions over the large-scale influx of Southern hill folk to Midwestern and Midatlantic cities. One of the largest (and least recognized) population shifts in American history is the migration of over three million Southern Appalachian people in the three decades after the start of World War II (a core part of the much larger Southern diaspora of at least 11 million people, black and white, who relocated to the North and West in the years between World War I and 1970). Appalachian outmigration began in earnest around the turn of the century, grew significantly during the Depression years, and then leapt upward in the early 1940s in response to the boom in industrial war production work during World War II. It again rose dramatically in the 1950s, largely in response to the widespread mechanization of the coal mines and the rise of natural gas as an alternative to coal. Millions of Southern Appalachian people in these years fled the mass unemployment of the coal fields for Midwestern cities such as Cincinnati, Chicago, Detroit, and smaller towns throughout southern Ohio and Indiana where a strong economy and the drastic reduction of European immigrants as a result of new restrictive immigration quotas made jobs fairly plentiful.³

Free from the institutionalized racism faced by their Southern black counterparts, the majority of Appalachian migrants were able to find employment and slowly to improve their economic situation. Yet the perception of Southern white migrants as an inassimilable and unwanted population was widespread in the postwar Midwest. Job listings that “No Southerners need apply” and restaurant owners who refused to serve “hillbillies” were not uncommon, and Appalachian Southerners were branded with a variety of derogatory labels including “WASPs” (White Appalachian Southern Protestants), “SAMs” (Southern Appalachian Migrants), “ridgerunners,” “briar-hoppers,” and most universally, “hillbillies.” Always potentially negative, “hillbilly” in this context was unequivocally a derisive slur and the incoming mountain folk became the butt of jokes of varying levels of crassness. “Know the reason for building the Brent Spence bridge (spanning the Ohio River at Cincinnati) with two levels?” went one local quip. “So that all of the hillbillies leaving Ohio can take off their shoes and pass them below to their cousins leaving Kentucky for Ohio.” More mean-spirited was the oft-told 1950s joke that there were now only 48 states because “all of Kentucky moved to Ohio, and Ohio went to hell.” Perhaps the clearest example of widespread Midwestern

opposition toward the Appalachian migrants was the results of a 1951 Wayne University survey of Detroit residents that asked respondents to identify “undesirable people” who were “not good to have in the city.” “Poor Southern whites” and “hillbillies” were identified by 21 percent of those surveyed, second only to “criminals” and “gangsters” and well ahead of “drifters,” “Negroes,” and “foreigners.”⁴

A growing regional concern in Midwestern cities since at least the 1930s, the Southern migrant “problem” was first presented to a national audience beginning in the late 1950s. Striking to present day readers is the explicitly racialized depiction of this population. James Maxwell’s “Down from the Hills and into the Slums” (1956), for example, opens by quoting an Indianapolis resident fearful of what she considered an uncivilized and dangerously independent population. Maxwell then informs what he presumes to be his shocked readers that this group was not “Puerto Ricans” or “Mexicans” but “white Anglo-Saxon Protestants,” a group “usually considered to be the most favored in American society.” Heavily reliant on antagonistic law enforcement officials for informants, he quotes authoritatively a police officer who accused the newcomers of a wide variety of crimes including “shootings, child neglect, rape ... [and] incest....” Although he stresses the difficulties migrants face, Maxwell generally portrays them as a backward people badly out of sync with urban ways and mores.⁵

The most infamous example of such fear mongering was Albert Votaw’s astounding “The Hillbillies Invade Chicago” in the February 1958 *Harper’s*. “The city’s toughest integration problem has nothing to do with Negroes” read the lead—rather “it involves a small army of white Protestant, Early American migrants from the South—who are usually proud, poor, primitive, and fast with a knife.” What follows is a steady stream of negative, even vicious, characterizations of “Southern ‘hillbillies,’” whom Votaw contradictorily describes as “apathetic but bumptious.” Relying, like Maxwell, on police sources, Votaw claims the newcomers are “clannish, proud, disorderly, [and] untamed to urban ways.” They have “fecund wives and numerous children,” their “housekeeping is easy to the point of disorder,” and “their habits—with respect to such matters as incest and statutory rape—are clearly at variance with urban legal requirements.” He also cites what he considered a brutal but accurate *Chicago Sunday Tribune* editorial that compared the arrival of “Southern hillbilly migrants” to “a plague of locusts” and described them as having “the lowest standard of living and moral code (if any), the biggest capacity for liquor, and the most savage tactics when drunk, which is most of the time.” Although they should be “the prototype of what the ‘superior’ American should be,” concludes Votaw, “on the streets of Chicago they seem to be the American dream gone berserk.” Such racialized language (one of his subheadings is “A Disgrace to their Race?”) suggests that the greatest concern about these migrants was not simply their poverty or social customs, but that they were impoverished whites at a time when many middle-class whites felt that only blacks and other minorities were “supposed” to be poor.⁶

Votaw's harangue drew a few angry responses from readers, including a Michigan man who compared the migrants to their ancestors who had defeated the British at King's Mountain and Cowpens during the Revolutionary War and who had pushed for the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions of 1798. To this respondent, the migrants' refusal to cooperate with government and police authorities and to maintain their distinct identity represented a properly stubborn independence worth celebrating. These letters to the editor reveal the continuing resonance of the rugged mountaineer myth as a counter image to the degenerate hillbilly. They also indicated a potential audience for a more positive portrayal of Appalachian migrants. *The Real McCoys*, the first rural situation comedy on network television and one of the most successful, offered just such a softened vision of Southern hill migrants.⁷

II. *The Real McCoys*—Romanticizing the Joads

First airing in the fall of 1957 and telling the story of a West Virginia farm family seeking a better life in California's San Fernando Valley, *The Real McCoys* offered an updated and rosier story of Southern agrarian migrants than that offered by either Votaw and his colleagues or John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, from which it clearly draws. The series acknowledged American economic hardship in the midst of affluence but argued that it was eventually surmountable solely through personal initiative. The pilot episode opens with a multi-generational family of Southern migrants riding the California roadways in a decrepit old jalopy. As described in the pilot episode's script, "strapping mountain boy" Luke McCoy (Richard Crenna) and his 20-year-old wife, Kate, sit alongside Luke's 7-year-old brother Little Luke, 12-year-old sister "Aunt Hassie" (an allusion to the well-worn idea of mountain women's life-long fecundity), and Grampa McCoy, "an authentic ... grizzled specimen of the species hillbilly." A highway patrolman stops the McCoys, like the Joads. Unlike the contempt and hostility that the Joads face, however, here the friendly policeman simply wants to return a spare tire that had fallen off the back of their car and to wish them "Good luck." When the McCoys reach their destination, rather than a squalid migrant labor camp, they pull up to a rundown but workable ranch they have inherited from a relative.⁸

More similar to the *Grapes of Wrath* was the lead characters' constant economic struggle. Director Hy Averback argued the show's popularity stemmed from its "premise of being able to fight poverty," but it was a fight that the McCoys usually lost. In an episode in the third season, for instance, when a salesman assures them that television sets are now so inexpensive "any family with an average income can afford them," Luke replies glumly, "If our income ever gets average, we'll be back to see you." Although they do buy a television by episode's end, the themes of "doing without" and painfully slow economic advancement that ran throughout the program's six-year broadcast contrasted dramatically with the dominant motif of comfortable affluence in family sitcoms of the late 1950s. Such a backdrop of economic hardship also suggested that poverty or near-poverty were simply part of the McCoys' "mountain culture."⁹

Cantankerous and old-fashioned but lovable Grampa, played by long-time character actor Walter Brennan, was the undisputed star of the show and the epitome of the backwards mountaineer opposed to all things modern, from “pipe water” and daily baths to buying a newer car and opening a bank account. “There’s only really one rule,” summarized Averbach about the nature of the scripts, “that whatever it is, Grandpa is against it.” Yet despite his curmudgeonly outlook, Grampa also represented a strong work ethic, dignified poverty, and basic horse sense derived from years of working the land. When he is denied a bank loan for the farm, Grampa challenges the loan officer’s overreliance on bureaucratic methods and “scientific” surveys. “Can figures tell you how good that soil is? Can figures tell you how easy a plow cuts through the fields without nickin’ your blade on any stones You don’t see a farm with your heart,” he scolds the young banker, “ya see it with your fountain pen!” Hardly unique to portrayals of mountain folk, this mix of ignorance of modern life and knowledge of the land and basic human nature was a staple of representations of rural folk since the colonial era depictions of Brother Jonathan and was at the heart of all the rural sitcoms of the 1960s.¹⁰

Other than in Grampa’s personality, however, the characters’ mountaineer status was generally understated except in a few episodes such as “Little Luke’s Education,” in which Little Luke is called a “dumb hillbilly” by classmates, or “The Talk of the Town,” in which he helps hide Grampa’s illiteracy by drawing a series of pictures for him to “read” before a public gathering. The McCoys dressed and acted like a typical farm family (at least as envisioned by Hollywood producers), and most of the plots, as in other sitcoms of the time, were designed to provide humorous but didactic moral lessons on the importance of family, hard work, and integrity. Furthermore, both in publicity and scripts, the producers tried to distance the backwardness and humble status of the television McCoys from contemporary mountaineers. In a promotional tour of West Virginia, Walter Brennan posed with a cocked shotgun in front of a log cabin but was careful to distinguish his character on the show from the local residents he met “in a tiny McCoy-like community.” “Grandpa is a throwback,” he explained to the *TV Guide* reporter. “These McCoys are pretty modern-thinking people. Not much real connection at all.” Likewise, in a 1961 episode titled “Back to West Virginnny,” the McCoy clan returns home to celebrate Great Grandma’s 100th birthday. Proud of all they have accomplished in California and expecting to find their relatives still awash in poverty, they are shocked to discover their kinfolk living in comfortably middle-class houses complete with ice-making refrigerators, wall-to-wall linoleum, and television sets, all thanks to their work in the new box-making factory.¹¹

This storyline also explores the limits of such progress and the sort of Faustian bargain the McCoys’ relatives have made in sacrificing a traditional rural ethic for mass consumer goods. In the subsequent episode, after all of Grampa’s relatives are fired when he refuses to sell to the box company a key plot of land that Great Grandma wishes to hold onto for nostalgic reasons, Grampa tries to comfort his kin by assuring them that “McCoys are people o’ the soil” and that they can all go back to farming. Yet to Grampa’s relatives, Jed

and Myra, such a return to the land is impossible after one has been exposed to “the finer things in life.” “Linoleum becomes a habit,” sighs Myra; “If I have to give up eatin’ them TV dinners I swear I think I’d die,” adds Jed. The writers’ highlighting of even at the time debased modern goods as symbols of modern living and the loss of a rural ethic offers a limited questioning of the “costs” of progress, and the storyline does reflect (albeit in an offhand manner) the exploitation of the land and people of Appalachia by extractive industries. In the end, however, this conflict between industrially driven consumerism and a pastoral ethic is finessed: Grampa agrees to sell the land to the box company and the factory owner agrees to relocate Great Grandma’s house to the top of the knob where she can look out over the whole valley (although there is no mention of the fact that it will probably be choked with smoke!). The show thus both raised questions about the price of progress and resolved the issue in a way that ultimately upheld the primacy of mass consumerism and industrial development.¹²

Writers Irving and Norman Pincus found that 1950s network television executives were initially very wary about airing a rural-based situation comedy, and only ABC, the smallest and least successful of the networks, was willing to take a chance on such an untested product. *The Real McCoys’* dramatic success (the eighth highest-rated show for the 1958 season, the fifth highest of the 1960 season, and never out of the top 20 from 1958 through 1961) illustrated the vast potential for other rural-based programming—a lesson network executives quickly took to heart. The show also had a more specific influence on the pastoral comedies that followed. Paul Henning, who wrote a few of the series’ episodes, directly borrowed the show’s opening for *The Beverly Hillbillies*, and two of its main writers, Jim Fritzell and Everett Greenbaum (who penned the West Virginia episodes described above), went on to write many episodes for the next highly successful rural comedy, *The Andy Griffith Show*.¹³

III. String Bands, Rock-Throwing Crazies, and the War on Poverty: Mountaineers on *The Andy Griffith Show*

The Andy Griffith Show remains one of the most successful shows in television history. Always rated in the top ten during its 1960 to 1968 run and the top-ranked program of 1967, it has never been off the air since its inception. Mountain folk were only occasional characters in the program’s first two years, and the show generally celebrated the simple pleasures of small town life. But the show’s southern Piedmont setting (the fictitious town of Mayberry was based on Griffith’s home town of Mount Airy, North Carolina, close by the Virginia border on the edge of the Blue Ridge mountains) and Griffith’s own professional background (he launched his career with a yokel standup routine “What It Was Was Football” in 1953 and rose to fame by playing rube Private Will Stockdale in *No Time for Sergeants* [1958] on Broadway, television, and film) always linked the show, at least indirectly, to hillbilly imagery.¹⁴

Usually rough-mannered and slightly unkempt older men, the few hill folk represented in the show's first two seasons served as unsophisticated and slightly antagonistic country cousins to Sheriff Andy Taylor (Griffith) and the Mayberry townsfolk, who were themselves perceived as bumpkins in the eyes of most urban outsiders on the show. Symbols of stubbornness, ignorance, and distrust of modern science and technology, the mountaineer characters tended to oppose any efforts to improve their lot in life. In a 1962 episode, for example, mountain farmer Rafe Hollister refuses to get a tetanus shot until convinced to do so by Andy, who sings the song he plans to perform at Rafe's funeral. Somewhat more frequently, the show incorporated standard mountaineer tropes such as moonshining (a theme used six times in the first four seasons) and feuding. In "A Feud is a Feud" (1960), with a plot based loosely on both *Romeo and Juliet* and the love affair between Roseanna McCoy and Johnse Hatfield of the famed feuding families, two mountain farmers carry on a senseless conflict, the origins of which neither can recall, and forbid their children to marry one another. Although both men make a pretense of wanting to kill the other, they are afraid to risk their lives to accomplish the task. Here the older generation of mountaineers are presented as incompetently violent rubes, but their far-less-stereotyped children represent the capacity of such people to bridge the gap between an archaic and wrong-headed "mountain culture" and an idealized contemporary America.¹⁵



"You got time to breathe, you got time for music." The Dillards, with thanks to Jim Clark and The Andy Griffith Show Rerun Watchers Club (TAGSRWC) Archives.

In March of 1963, the show began to feature recurring characters who exemplified separate but related strands of the mythic mountaineer persona. Briscoe Darling (played by Denver Pyle) and his family represent the footloose musical mountaineer who can be traced back to 1920s string bands such as the Cumberland Ridge Runners and the Hillbillies, and even to the antebellum song-story of the Arkansas Traveler. Symbols of a backwards but authentic mountain culture, the Darlings are superstitious, undereducated, slow-talking or mute (a running gag is that none of the four Darling boys ever say a word except when singing), and comfortably self-sufficient. In actuality, the Darling sons were the Missouri Ozarks string band the Dillards who wrote many of the songs they performed on the show.

Music is central to the Darlings' way of life, a point driven home by family patriarch Briscoe. "You got time to breathe, you got time for music," he tells Andy in one episode. Although clearly presented as comical throwbacks, this portrait is not demeaning, but one that celebrates a genuine, indigenous folk music. The Darlings mention many laughably-titled songs such as "Never Hit Your Grandma with a Great Big Stick," but the songs they actually play are either songs the Dillards had composed or traditional Southern folk tunes like "Boil Them Cabbage Down" and "There is a Time for Love and Laughter." The family always seems somewhat ill at ease during their periodic visits to Mayberry and even can pose a potential threat to the townsfolk (Briscoe once kidnaps Andy's Aunt Bee and brings her back to his cabin in an effort to convince her to marry him). But Sheriff Taylor appreciates their authentic mountain mannerisms and culture and the feeling is mutual. "That haircut of yours may be city-style," Briscoe warmly tells Taylor, "but your heart was shaped in a bowl."¹⁶

If the Darlings represent the slightly reckless musical mountaineers, Ernest T. Bass symbolizes the deranged mountain man, so wild that even his fellow hill folk consider him a threat. "Oh he's a pestilence," explains Briscoe Darling's son-in-law when Andy asks where Bass can be located, "and a pestilence will find you." As portrayed by Howard Morris, Bass is a half-savage who has a simian-like gait, shrieks like a chimpanzee, and whose trademark is throwing rocks through windows. Like George Washington Harris's Sut Lovingood before him, he is a "natural man" who constantly boasts of his physical prowess, once noting proudly that he was able to carry a mule five miles on his back. "I'm a little mean," Bass acknowledges sheepishly, "but I make up for it by being real healthy." Although he continually tries to fit into society and social institutions—different episodes show his effort to join the army, to mingle at a formal reception, and to gain a primary-school education—his every encounter with civilization inevitably proves disastrous, and each episode closes with Sheriff Taylor hastening him back to the mountains and hoping he will not return. Although Bass is ostensibly a comic character, potential threat always underlies his eccentricity, and the distance is not very great between this characterization and outwardly vicious media mountaineers—from the Hatburns of the 1922 film *Tol'able David* to the Scraggs of Al Capp's comic strip *Li'l Abner*, and even to the mountain savages of *Deliverance* (1972).¹⁷

The timing of these “mountaineer” episodes suggests they were not randomly selected storylines but were shaped by and reflected their historical context. The Darlings and Ernest T. Bass appeared in eight episodes between March 1963 and December 1964, but only in one additional show thereafter, and no mountaineer characters appeared on the show after October 1966. Part of the explanation for this brief surge in mountaineer portrayals was undoubtedly the phenomenal success of *The Beverly Hillbillies*. But like that show, the Darling and Bass episodes were also a response to the sudden reemergence of the Southern mountain region and people in the national consciousness and the conception of Appalachia as a distinct “problem region.” These developments were in turn part of a general rediscovery of poverty in America in the early 1960s, a troubling realization that challenged the middle class’s widespread faith in a classless society and an ever-improving quality of life.

As will be familiar to most readers of this journal, Appalachia first reappeared on the national radar during the West Virginia Democratic Presidential primary of 1960 in which candidate Senator John Kennedy made poverty and hunger in that state major themes of his campaign. One of Kennedy’s first acts once elected was to implement emergency relief legislation for West Virginia. He also supported the establishment of the Area Development Administration (ADA) to provide development loans and grants for “depressed areas” including portions of certain Appalachian states.

The ADA programs, however, were generally under-funded and poorly administered, and Kennedy’s commitment to either a regional or a national anti-poverty program was limited. Nor did he or many others yet conceive of the whole of the southeastern mountains as “Appalachia,” a homogenous “problem region” within a prosperous nation. Both these conceptions would change during the following year of 1962 with the publication of three influential books. *The Southern Appalachian Region—A Survey*, a collection of scholarly essays, presented Appalachia as a unified but troubled region. Harry Caudill’s *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* (subtitled *A Biography of a Depressed Region*) traced its history of economic exploitation and defined Appalachia as a



Orner Ernest T. Bass (Howard Morris), brick in hand, plans his revenge as Mayberry barber Floyd Lawson looks on (Film Archives, State Historical Society of Wisconsin).

ravaged land and a battered people. Finally, Michael Harrington's *The Other America*, by far the most widely influential of the three, called for decisive action to respond to the 40 to 50 million seemingly invisible Americans living in poverty, "maimed in body and spirit" and experiencing "needless suffering in the most advanced society in the world." Both Appalachia and Appalachian migrants ("urban hillbillies") were a central focus of his book, and Harrington presented the region as the locus of white poverty in America, equivalent to the black poor of the nation's inner cities. The year closed with the CBS News documentary "Christmas in Appalachia" that movingly contrasted the ideal of yuletide plenty with the "wretched" poverty of the remote Appalachian hollers.¹⁸

These works led Kennedy and his economic advisers to focus new attention on the issue of poverty in America and Appalachia, culminating under President Lyndon Johnson in a declaration of "unconditional war on poverty," the formation of the Office of Economic Opportunity, and the establishment of the Appalachian Regional Commission. Although the anti-poverty programs in Appalachia were flawed and poorly administered, the hill folk played a central symbolic role in the media's coverage of the War on Poverty, particularly in the pivotal year of 1964, offering proof that poverty was a problem facing the entire nation and not just inner-city minorities. To illustrate the need for the Appalachian Regional Development Act that he introduced that year, President Johnson made a well-publicized trip to eastern Kentucky in April, briefly shaking hands with impoverished locals on the front stoop of a ramshackle cabin. And nearly every major general-circulation magazine and newspaper featured articles on "the plight of the hill people" punctuated by the faces of dirty, ill-clothed and malnourished men, women, and children living in tarpaper shacks.¹⁹

Television comedies like *The Andy Griffith Show* and *The Beverly Hillbillies* that featured mountaineer characters reflected the national media's fascination with this "white other"—an isolated population outside mainstream American society. But they also served as a palliative for these disturbing images, providing a far more upbeat portrayal than did the news media of plain but comfortable folk who were upright, self-assured, and imbued with a strong cultural tradition. Such images lessened the sense of the deep failure of the American economic system and its inability to prevent seemingly intractable poverty. They also tacitly reinforced the widespread belief that the mountain people were trapped in a "culture of poverty," but redefined it from being a crippling cycle of degeneracy and dysfunction to a lifestyle choice of people who valued autonomy and family time over material advancement.

The War on Poverty and the Appalachian poor were, of course, never directly mentioned on these programs or in any of the press accounts on these shows. Nor do I mean to argue that these shows were *intentionally* created as a possible counter response to depictions like "Christmas in Appalachia" or even with the War on Poverty in mind. As always, the primary goal of television producers and network executives was to maximize profits by attracting the widest possible audience. But the historical context of the rediscovery of Appalachia and the War on Poverty did make these programs resonate with large sectors of the American public and, therefore, contributed to the

popularity of these shows. In turn, presenting poverty as a self-imposed lifestyle rather than the direct result of economic exploitation and local political corruption, these shows minimized the plight of many Southern mountain folk (and by extension, the poor in general), and thus perhaps weakened public sentiment for emergency federal intervention and assistance.

IV. Redefining the Hillbilly and Reshaping Television: Paul Henning and *The Beverly Hillbillies*

Like *The Real McCoys* and *The Andy Griffith Show*, *The Beverly Hillbillies* gained a broad audience and earned high ratings for much of its eight-year run (1962-1970) on CBS. Like these other programs, the show's popularity stemmed partly from the way it played off of fear and fascination with Southern mountaineers much in the news. But unlike its predecessors, *The Beverly Hillbillies* was more than simply a highly successful rural situation comedy that featured mountaineer characters. Instead, the show became a flash point for a national debate about the nature of television programming and the political possibilities of popular culture. Further, by redefining the hillbilly stereotype, the show also offered an often overlooked and at times trenchant critique of postwar American culture and values. Finally, the program's astounding success reshaped network television, as the show became a catalyst for the wave of rural sitcoms that swept over the airwaves in the 1960s.

As the show's popular theme song reiterated each week, *The Beverly Hillbillies* told the story of a family of Ozark mountaineers—Jed Clampett (played by Buddy Ebsen), Granny (Irene Ryan), Elly May (Donna Douglas), and Jethro (Max Baer)—who became millionaires after discovering oil on their hardscrabble land and who move into a Beverly Hills mansion.²⁰ The show was the creation of Paul Henning, one of the most influential producers in television history. As the writer and producer of *The Bob Cummings Show* (including the hillbilly episodes cited above), occasional writer for *The Real McCoys* and *The Andy Griffith Show*, creator, writer, and producer of *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *Petticoat Junction* (1963-1970, CBS), and executive producer of *Green Acres* (1965-1971, CBS), he helped shape nearly every televised program between 1955 and 1970 with a contemporary rural setting. Born in Independence, Missouri, in 1911, Henning began professionally in the early 1930s as a singer and jack-of-all-trades for radio station KMBC in Kansas City. During his long career as a writer and producer, he wrote for radio, film, and television including *Fibber McGee and Molly*, *The Rudy Vallee Show*, *Burns and Allen*, and *The Bob Cummings Show*. Throughout his career, Henning exhibited a fascination with hillbilly characterizations, an interest he traced back to encounters with Ozark hill folk during hiking trips around Noel, Missouri, on the Arkansas-Oklahoma border where he attended Boy Scout camp every summer as a teenager. "I just sort of fell in love with the whole picture down there," he later recalled, "and the people were so kind and gracious.... It was a wonderful experience ... that made a lasting impression on me...."²¹

Henning acknowledged other media influences as well, including “religiously” listening to Arkansas comedian Bob Burns’s monologues on the *Kraft Music Hall* starring Bing Crosby and attending a production of *Tobacco Road* in Kansas City, which he thought “hilarious” but which had a setting that was “so depressing.” Curiously, Henning failed to mention other clear media influences including the overloaded jalopy from *The Grapes of Wrath* (and later *The Real McCoys*), the Ma and Pa Kettle films, and, above all, Al Capp’s *Li’l Abner*. Not only were Jethro, Elly May, and Granny clearly drawn from Abner, Daisy Mae, and Mammy Yokum (a connection made by several reviewers when the show first aired), but Henning also featured scenes directly based on episodes in Capp’s comic strip. Thus, although Henning reconceptualized the hillbilly in important ways, his characters were thoroughly grounded in imagery of the past half-century.²²

Regardless of the earlier media influences on his characters, the actual idea for the show came together in two places. First, in 1959, having just visited Abraham Lincoln’s Kentucky homestead and whizzing along the highway, Henning wondered aloud “what reaction Abraham Lincoln might have had if he ... suddenly found himself seated in the car with us.” The idea stayed in the back of his mind until he read a news account of people in “a remote section of the Ozarks” who “actually ... [tried] to stop the building of a road” because, Henning surmised, “a lot of them made their living moonshining and they didn’t want ‘fereners,’ as they called them, coming in....” Thus, for Henning, like cartoonist Paul Webb before him who drew the “Mountain Boys” for *Esquire* magazine, the mountain folk were not only a backwards people living a century or more in the past, they also stood in opposition to the dominant culture’s notions of progress. Bringing such a people into the heart of modern, cosmopolitan America would not only provide a comical study in cultural contrast, but it would also allow him to “escape the week-to-week depressive setting of the backwoods thing” as in *Tobacco Road*.²³

The show’s second germination point was a late 1961 lunch meeting at the famous Brown Derby restaurant in Los Angeles between Henning, Filmways Television president Al Simon, and board chairman Martin Rasohoff. Filmways represented the new breed of independent production companies that were coming to dominate network television production. Simon had been urging Henning to write a rural-based comedy for Filmways for several years, even offering to buy the television rights to the popular movie characters Ma and Pa Kettle. When he and Rasohoff finally heard Henning’s ideas, they offered their instant support. In the immediate wake of the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency hearings on the deleterious social effects of television violence, Simon thought “the cycle was right for fun” and that Henning’s show “was going to be the best thing that hit television in a long, long while.” Rasohoff pledged \$100,000 on the spot before he had even lined up a sponsor.²⁴

The reception from the networks, however, was not as warm. ABC passed when the show was first offered, and although CBS was more interested, it provided little advertising and assigned the program to what Henning and

Simon deemed the “TV purgatory” of nine o’clock Wednesday night across from NBC’s highly rated *Perry Como Show*. Circumventing the network’s limited promotion, Filmways launched a media blitz of short promotional messages that aired in 85 cities to an estimated 35 million viewers. Henning also carefully controlled the public image of his lead actors in an effort to maintain their believability. In contrast to the actors and producers of *The Real McCoys* who distanced their characterizations from actual mountain people, Henning sought to present his actors as credible mountaineers, a fact clearly outlined in a June 28, 1962 memorandum:

I would prefer that Buddy Ebsen, Irene Ryan, Donna Douglas, and Max Baer *cease to exist as themselves*. The dissemination and publication of personal biographies ... and so-called squibs, blurbs, plants in columns and photographic layouts of them at home *are to be discouraged by every means at our disposal!* NO STORY IS BETTER THAN THE WRONG STORY! ... and a wrong story is one that damages the television image of our hillbilly characters.

He also stressed that publicity layouts of his stars Buddy Ebsen on his yacht or Max Baer at a nightclub were “not conducive to believing in the characters,” and he instructed his actors “to slant comments to ‘the credibility of the show’ and ‘the basic integrity’ of the roles they played.”²⁵

The result of this barrage of carefully controlled publicity was phenomenal ratings from the very first broadcast, watched by an estimated 50 percent of television viewers at the time. The show became the number-one-rated show by the end of its first month, the highest rated show of the 1962 and 1963 television seasons, and never fell from the top 20 until its final years. Furthermore, the show boasts the highest rated half-hour individual episode in television history and eight individual episodes among the fifty highest. Not only a huge success in America, *The Beverly Hillbillies* gained large followings in England, Holland, and Japan, becoming a truly international phenomenon. Concluded one British commentator, “More people in the world today know *The Beverly Hillbillies*, it is safe to assert, than know President Johnson or even the Pope.”²⁶

Such overall ratings do not necessarily indicate that a broad cross-section of Americans was viewing the show. A disproportionate number of the show’s viewers lived in rural, small town or Southern locales, and American Research Bureau “arbitron” ratings for selected urban markets reveal that the show did not reach consistent top-five status for most cities until the spring of 1963. These figures also suggest that the show was somewhat more popular with urban viewers in the South than those in the North and West. Furthermore, some researchers have challenged the accuracy of the Nielsen ratings from this era, arguing that they over-counted rural and small town viewers. Others have argued that urban African American viewers have been historically underrepresented in Nielsen samples and that few blacks watched *The Beverly Hillbillies* and other rural-oriented programming. On the other hand, both Irene Ryan and Paul Henning claimed, perhaps self-servingly, that blacks were some

of the show's earliest and most eager viewers. Henning later noted that during a sequence filmed at the Los Angeles airport, "the people who greeted us, you know, like old friends were ... the sky caps and ... the black people. They were the first to enthusiastically embrace the show." Regardless of the accuracy of this assessment or of the Nielsen ratings, *The Beverly Hillbillies's* popularity with a broad swath of Americans and its influence on 1960s television programming as well as public conceptions of mountaineers is indisputable.²⁷

In stark contrast to its high ratings, initial press reaction was overwhelmingly negative. Most reviewers found the plots inane, and the gags, mistaken interpretations, and corny word play embarrassing (asked in an early episode if Jethro went to Eton as a boy, Jed replies, "If I know Jethro, he went to eatin' when he was a baby"). One critic wrote, "An esthetic regression, mindless, stupid, a striking demonstration of cultural Neanderthalism." *Variety* called it "painful to sit through ... strictly out of Dogpatch and Li'l Abner, minus the virtues of the Al Cappisms." "At no time," continued the reviewer, "does it give the viewer credit for even a smattering of intelligence ... even the hillbillies should take umbrage."²⁸

The idea that the show was seen as the opening salvo of a lowbrow assault that would further debase American culture explains many critics' vitriol. They shared the outlook of Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Newton Minow who had blasted the medium a year earlier as "a vast wasteland" of "mayhem, violence, sadism, [and] murder" as well as "formula comedies about totally unbelievable families." To these reviewers, *The Beverly Hillbillies* was further proof of the destructive vapidness of television and an attack on "legitimate" culture at a time when President Kennedy's "Camelot" seemed to be initiating a "heady cultural ferment" in the nation. As one astute commentator summarized the show's critical reaction: "Gone is the cheerful belief that with President Kennedy, Newton Minow, and Leonard Bernstein ... at the helm, a mass cultural awakening had taken[,] and is taking, place. Thirty-six million people! How could they do this to us?" Several commentators drew the connection to Minow's warning. Richard Warren Lewis in the *Saturday Evening Post* wrote the show is "dedicated to the proposition that ... Minow's wasteland was really a cornfield," while Bob Hope quipped at the National Association of Broadcasters' reception that "Newton Minow's needlings have led our great industry up the path to the *Beverly Hillbillies*—an outhouse in the vast wasteland." Replied Irene Ryan in self-defense, "All I can say is that ... millions of folks have moved that outhouse *inside* their homes." And even critical reviewers were forced to acknowledge that despite their faith in the triumph of highbrow culture, they and the "in-group outside TV [had] obviously overlooked the basic hunger of the country in artistic matters: Ozark humor." Yet as had earlier disparagers of early country music and the 1950s Ma and Pa Kettle films, the show's critics interpreted its vast popularity simply as confirmation of its baseness.²⁹

Four primary factors help explain the show's unprecedented success. First, particularly in its first few seasons, the show was well crafted and genuinely funny. Ebsen and Ryan were both skillful entertainers who played their roles to

perfection. Director Richard Whorf had strong credentials in television and the Shakespearean stage, and Henning was a consummate professional who worked an exhausting schedule. Henning claimed that the show was so well received that they had to abandon the idea of filming before a live audience because “the laughter was so loud.... They laughed right through lines.” Even critic Gilbert Seldes, although opposed to what he saw as the show’s “encouragement to ignorance,” nevertheless had to admit that “the single simple, and to some people outrageous, fact is that *The Beverly Hillbillies* is funny.”³⁰

Second, much of what made the show humorous was the way Henning intentionally and successfully redefined the meaning and image of the hillbilly, making it more broadly appealing and innocuous. Most obviously, this sanitizing of the hillbillies was the result of making them millionaires and moving them out of the hills and into luxurious Beverly Hills. But Henning also actively tried to clean up and desexualize his characters, both to respond to the restrictive social mores of network television (a medium in which married couples had to be shown sleeping in separate beds well into the 1960s) and to remove the stigma of filth and debasement that defined earlier hillbilly characterizations. In a 1971 interview, Al Simon summed up the dramatic conceptual change the show had achieved. Before *The Beverly Hillbillies*, he observed, “the word ‘hillbillies’ brought to mind the picture of dirty, unkempt people wearing long beards, inhabiting dilapidated shacks with outhouses out back.” But because of his show, he claimed, “the word has a new meaning all over America. Now, it denotes charming, delightful, wonderful, clean, wholesome people.”³¹

As Simon stated, the show did move dramatically, although incompletely, away from the standard hillbilly stereotype. The first time the audience sees Jed Clampett, he rushes in the door of his bare-bones Ozark cabin and immediately washes his hands. Long flowing beards and outhouses never appeared on the show, nor did family feuds or shootouts with law enforcement agents, though Granny does occasionally raise her shotgun and rail against “rev’noors” and “Yankees.” Although moonshining remained a common trope, drunkenness of the hillbilly characters did not. The Clampett clan dressed in jeans, linen blouses, and plaid shirts, but except for Jed’s signature tattered slouch hat, their attire was clean and untorn. The alluring physiques of Elly May and Jethro played on standard conceptions of the innate sexuality of mountaineers and lines about Elly May’s body peppered the early episodes, but both characters were consistently portrayed as either impossibly sexually incompetent or naïve. Likewise, potential threat and violence remained latent in all the characters (in the common display of shotguns, Jethro’s lunacy, Elly May’s menagerie of animals, and particularly Granny’s quick temper), but they also exuded a deep empathy for those they felt were less fortunate than themselves and an abiding neighborly warmth. Finally, in an era of a growing generation gap and challenges to parental authority, Jed is an undisputed but benevolent patriarch, and Elly May and Jethro almost always immediately followed their elders’ orders.³²

Henning also bridged the standard cultural division between the noble mountaineer and the hillbilly buffoon by merging the two into the same family.

While Jethro's absolute ignorance of modernity was little removed from portrayals of Li'l Abner, Jed, like Grampa McCoy before him, symbolized the rugged, independent, and commonsensical mountain man who had a clear sense of himself and his culture. This mixture of traditional rural values and hillbilly buffoonery was perfectly captured by the 1963 *Saturday Evening Post* cover illustration showing Jed and Granny in the role of the tight-lipped couple from Grant Wood's famed 1930 masterpiece *American Gothic* while foolishly grinning Jethro and bosomy Elly May peer around either side of them. As the illustrator recognized, the show's hillbilly characterizations never entirely abandoned earlier meanings and indeed exploited more bawdy and degenerate stereotypes. But the show did expand the potential meaning of "hillbilly" and made it less of a slur nationally.

Third, the show's popularity grew from its capacity, like much of popular culture, to offer escapism and security in an uncertain world. The early 1960s was an era of social and political turmoil as the Civil Rights Movement at home and the Cold War abroad convulsed the nation. In the show's first week, in early October, 1962, newspaper headlines focused on the riot caused by James Meredith's enrollment at the University of Mississippi, church burnings in Georgia, the shooting of an East German who tried to scale the Berlin Wall, and a continuing deadlock at the Geneva disarmament talks. In such an uncertain and frightening time, *The Beverly Hillbillies* (and situation comedies in general) offered the comfort of a totally known universe. As Director Richard Whorf explained, "You know that no one will be killed, no one will have a brain tumor." And the program continued to provide psychic sanctuary for millions as the nation continued to be shaken by a steady stream of unsettling social and political crises, none more devastating than the assassination of President Kennedy in November 1963. Perhaps this atmosphere of uncertainty helps account for the phenomenal ratings (44 percent of all possible television viewers and a 65 percent share of the actual viewing audience) garnered by the show's otherwise unnoteworthy January 8, 1964 episode in which Granny mistakes a kangaroo for a giant jackrabbit—the highest ratings of any half-hour of programming in the history of television.³³

Yet to argue *The Beverly Hillbillies* offered mere "escape" says little. As historian Lawrence Levine rightly reminds us, the potential for escapism lies in all forms of expressive culture; what matters most is not the mere fact of escapism but "to know from what and towards what we are escaping." To a far greater degree than either of its immediate predecessors, the show deftly mixed its corny jokes and absurd characterizations with social reflection and criticism. In the tradition of most producers of popular fare, Henning routinely denied this deeper interpretation of the show's significance. "Our only message is—have fun," he told the press. "Why go into deep analysis about it?" he scoffed on another occasion. "It's just escape, a lotta laughs, solid entertainment.... Viewers like 'em, and that's that." Cast members, however, understood the show's message was something more than belly laughs. Ebsen suggested that it was a reaction against a throwaway society, while Ryan claimed it represented "one of

the last folk traditions in America, the lives and culture of the hill people.” Although both interpretations were valid, the show’s deeper significance, and the key to its success, lay in the way it both upheld and challenged the “American dream,” blending a celebration of wealth and a lifestyle of leisure with a sustained critique of affluence, modernity, and progress.³⁴

On the one hand, the show reveled in the wealth, status, and leisure of the Hollywood elite and exploited California’s popularity in the public imagination. Beyond an updating of the Joads’ saga, the Clampetts’ relocation mirrored the transplanting of millions of Americans during and after World War II to “the Golden State,” a demographic shift that made California the most populous state in the union by the early 1960s. Likewise, their instant-millionaire status offered an exaggerated reflection of the relatively rapid prosperity attained in the early 1960s by many Americans who had risen from Depression era hardship to suburban ranch homes. Like their attitudes toward the Kettles a decade earlier, audiences could both laugh at and sympathize with the Clampetts’ confusion about the proper use of what were to them new appliances and conveniences (in an early episode, Jed asks why the “electric meat grinder”—a kitchen disposal—does not work properly, and believes he can use a telephone simply by shouting into it while it lies on its cradle). Despite the hillbillies’ ignorance, viewers recognized in Jed and Granny’s misunderstandings certain reflections of their own efforts to adjust to the new commodified culture.³⁵

On the other hand, the values and actions of the Clampetts consistently called this dream of conspicuous consumption into question. Granny, the family member most in a cultural war with her new surroundings, finds Beverly Hills a horrific place “full of the laziest, greasiest, unfriendliest mess o’ people I ever laid eyes on!” With intentional irony, Henning thus employs the very words historically used to characterize “hillbillies” to denounce the snobbish and idle Beverly Hills elite. Whereas her Ozark neighbors prized her skills as a cook, housekeeper, distiller, herbalist, and meteorologist, in Beverly Hills, Granny is considered at best eccentric and, at worst, a menace. And well she should be, for she is the character who most often exposes the vapidness and uselessness of the lifestyles of Beverly Hills and, by extension, of much of comfortably affluent American society. When Jethro complains that a piece of wax fruit is tasteless and Jed surmises that perhaps it is not meant to be eaten, Granny thunders:

That’s the trouble with this mis’uble place, y’ ain’t s’posed t’ do nothin’!
Ain’t s’posed t’ keep cows er pigs er chickens ... ain’t s’posed t’ plow up
th’ ground an’ plant corn er rye er ‘falfa ... ain’t s’posed t’ fire up th’ still
an’ make a little moonshine whiskey! Answer me this—what *kin* y’ do in
Beverly Hills?

Like all the Clampetts, Granny may be ignorant of all things modern, but she has a clear sense of herself and her rural heritage.³⁶

Like Granny but without her hot temper, Jed Clampett also epitomizes a traditional rural value system based on unswerving commitment to family and kin, deep moral integrity in his dealings with all others, and rock-solid horse

sense. These traits allow him to defeat or win over the steady stream of corporate and petty scam artists who weekly threaten his fortune. Jed also symbolizes egalitarian democracy, treating everyone he encounters with decency and kindness and acknowledging no legitimate distinctions of class or status. In an early episode, after his banker's assistant, Miss Jane Hathaway (Nancy Kulp), expresses shame for the way she has surreptitiously tried to spirit the Clampetts out of town, Jed replies: "The way I look at it, ain't nobody got a right to be ashamed of nobody else. Good Lord made us all," he sermonizes, "and if we's good enough for him we sure ought to be good enough for each other."³⁷

Such values stem from his humble mountain background symbolized by his rustic log cabin home that to Jed and Granny is a spiritual as much as a physical place. In the pilot episode, after an oil company has purchased Jed's land for \$25 million, he asks his cousin Pearl (Jethro's mother) if he really should move to California. She responds incredulously:

Jed, how can you even ask? Look around you! You're eight miles from the nearest neighbor! You're overrun with skunks, possums, coons and bobcats! You got kerosene lamps for light ... a wood stove to cook on winter and summer ... (indicates jug) you're drinkin' homemade moonshine ... (picks up soap) washin' with homemade lye soap ... and your bathroom is 50 feet from the house! And you ask should you move!

Jed ponders her words a minute and then replies: "Yeah—I guess you're right. A man'd be a dang fool to leave all this!" Clearly, his answer is meant to be seen as comically absurd, reflecting a stunning isolation from and ignorance of modern conveniences. Yet in a world of ever-increasing social and individual disruption, it just as clearly reflects an unshakeable sense of home and belonging. Despite his new riches, Jed refuses to change himself or his way of life. He continues to dress in plain clothes, eat regional cuisine, and drive his ancient rattletrap of a truck. In contrast, his ludicrous relative Jethro tries to embrace the new consumerist California lifestyles, always with disastrous results.³⁸

In stark contrast to Jed's loyalty, honesty, and integrity and Granny's tenaciousness, the world beyond the Clampett household is peopled almost exclusively by money-grubbers, snobs, con artists, and sycophants. The show's main antagonist, Jed's banker Milburn Drysdale (Raymond Bailey), combines many of these qualities. He is a man so miserly and so desperate to keep the Clampetts as his main depositors (they repeatedly threaten to pull out their money), he is willing to go to any lengths to keep them happy no matter how much he must humiliate and degrade himself to do so. Numerous episodes feature him wearing ridiculous costumes or placing himself at the beck and call of Elly May's menagerie of "critters." His wife Margaret (Harriet MacGibbon), a vain and petty snob, is a hypochondriac who dotes on her precious poodle and considers the Clampetts uncouth barbarians who are humiliating her in the eyes of high society. Even Jane Hathaway, the least "caricatured" character on the show and the one who graciously explains modern ways of living to the Clampetts, is nonetheless an often pathetic dilettante, incapable of leaving her

job despite her abusive boss. Many other one-time characters try to bilk the Clampetts out of their millions by taking advantage of their naïveté. The program therefore presents modern America, at least superficially, as venal, boorish, materialistic, and, ultimately, ethically and spiritually hollow.

A few insightful commentators recognized the deeper implications of the show's underlying message. Arnold Hano understood that despite its awful puns and corny plots, the show did provide at least a "twitting of shallowness and pretentiousness." He also appreciated that the show embodied a rejection of urbanity and "a return to ... natural ways" which he argued should have resonated with the "culture cult" who condemned the show as they "streamed from the cities, in search of Thoreau and Rousseau." Writing in the more self-consciously intellectual *Saturday Review*, Robert Lewis Shayon was more forthright in his defense of the show's social significance. To Shayon, the program was a "challenge to our money oriented value system" in striking contrast with the "pleasurable Eden" of most television programming. He acknowledged the show's "vaudeville patter" but argued that its corniness did not negate "the abrasiveness of ... [its] moral values" and their critical import. "Valid social criticism with a top-ten Nielsen is an absolute rarity in television," Shayon concluded. "This is the true measure of success of 'Beverly Hillbillies'—first of its kind."³⁹

Despite his perceptive commentary, Shayon badly underestimated the program's staying power. He felt the show's moral standards were so "heretical" the program could not endure, for they required the audience to "re-examine our own standards and discover their hollowness." What he failed to recognize, however, was that the power of the show's social critique was simultaneously made possible and undermined by the impossible ignorance and child-like naïveté of the characters and the absurd storylines. Because the Clampetts and their chief antagonists, the Drysdales, were cartoonish caricatures, their distance from reality was too great for them to serve either as compelling models of non-competitiveness and non-materialism (in the case of the Clampetts) or as legitimate symbols of moneyed power. Furthermore, for all the show's surface repudiation of the Beverly Hills lifestyle, the Clampetts never leave this den of hedonism and greed for longer than a few weeks, nor do they reshape their social environment in any meaningful way. Instead, they remain strangers in a strange land with little sense of purpose, no longer working the land yet unwilling to integrate into, and by doing so, to transform, the commercial society around them. In the end, as Hal Himmelstein notes, the message of the *Beverly Hillbillies* is "quite cynical," "admiring but ultimately discounting basic human values" connected to a mythical rural American past that theoretically lives on in the Southern mountains and "condemning yet tacitly accepting" the leisure and status world of Beverly Hills.⁴⁰

The immediate and ongoing success of *The Beverly Hillbillies* and, to a lesser extent, that of *The Andy Griffith Show*, helped reshape the look of network television and CBS in particular. They so dominated the television world in the early 1960s that in March of 1964, *TV Guide* featured these shows on its cover for two consecutive weeks. Henning's success led CBS to offer him

a contract for a new program of his choosing with the unheard of arrangement of not first requiring a pilot. *Petticoat Junction*, his new show about the small farming community of Hooterville, premiered in 1963 as the fourth highest-rated show of that season. Two years later, Henning collaborated on and was the executive producer of yet another CBS rural comedy, *Green Acres*. Indeed, the airwaves became saturated with rural situation comedies in the mode (but without the explicit hillbilly characterizations) of *The Beverly Hillbillies*. By 1966, CBS was airing five highly successful rural-based situation comedies (*The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Petticoat Junction*, *Green Acres*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, and *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.* [a spin-off of the latter]) and rode to network dominance on the backs of these programs.⁴¹

The Beverly Hillbillies phenomenon coupled with the spate of news accounts surrounding Appalachia and the War on Poverty helped spawn a new vogue for hillbilly imagery. Much of this imagery was related to the show itself; CBS launched a \$500,000 merchandizing campaign and the Clampetts appeared in television and print advertising for Kellogg's and Winston cigarettes (R.J. Reynolds Tobacco) and even in public service announcements for the Internal Revenue Service. Another striking example of this trend was the initial promotional campaign for Pepsi Corporation's Mountain Dew, a soft drink high in sugar, caffeine, and calories, and bearing a name that was a long-time synonym for moonshine whisky. The company chose to further advertise the product's potency and southeastern origins (Pepsi purchased the brand in 1964 from the Hartman Beverage Company of Knoxville, Tennessee) by embracing an explicitly hillbilly advertisement campaign. Between 1965 and 1968, many of these print and broadcast advertisements included a bearded, barefoot cartoon "spokesman" named "Willy the Hillbilly" and featured slogans such as "Yahoo Mountain Dew ... It'll Tickle Your Innards" and "ther's a bang in ever' bottle!" Radio promotions used hoary comedic exchanges between ignorant and slovenly rustics—"Sheeks, Sary Lou," the character "Clem" says to a mountain girl in one such spot, "I ain't never kissed *no one* 'ceptin' mah pet pig." The label even showed a picture of a hillbilly shooting at another emerging from an outhouse!⁴²

Although the Mountain Dew campaign ran through 1968, the cultural centrality of *The Beverly Hillbillies* was shorter lived. By the mid-1960s, the show's ratings had leveled off and the outrage that the show had caused had dissipated. As Judith Crist summed up in *TV Guide*'s 1966 review, "The Great Debate is over." She argued that the war between those who saw the show as proof of the "12-year-old mentality of the wanderers in the wasteland" and those who defended the program's social critique had waned as the program had settled into predictable comedy routines. Beyond changes in the show itself, however, the intellectual subtext behind the critics' apoplectic reaction—a belief in properly discrete levels of culture and the cultural and educational possibilities of television—no longer seemed as pressing a few years later. The sense that television should or could be anything more than a purveyor of strictly commercial entertainment did not long outlast Newton Minow's reign at the FCC (he resigned in 1963), and the rise of Pop Art, the new journalism, and

stadium-sized audiences for rock and roll concerts further broke down the long-crumbling barriers between different cultural “brow-levels.”⁴³

As Crist’s review suggests, *The Beverly Hillbillies* became considerably less significant in the second half of the decade. The show moved away from explicit themes of cultural conflict and instead increasingly focused on Jethro’s absurd ignorance or ridiculous plots featuring the shenanigans of Elly May’s animals or people dressed as animals. In an effort to keep the show at least somewhat fresh, Henning sent the Clampetts to England, Washington D.C., New York, and briefly back to the Ozarks—where four episodes were filmed in the ersatz mountaineer heritage village of Silver Dollar City (within present-day Branson, Missouri)—but none of these moves recaptured the show’s original potency. Beyond indicating Henning’s difficulty in coming up with new concepts after over 150 episodes, the program’s increasingly outlandish storylines also reflected broader social and cultural transformations. As the escalation of the Vietnam War and increasing radicalization of the Civil Rights Movement divided Americans and energized a wide variety of protest movements and subsequent counter-movements, television became dominated by escapist situation-comedies—a trend encouraged by the success of *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Many of these half-hour comedies were either set in rural or small-town locales or, in the case of *Bewitched*, *The Munsters*, *The Addams Family*, and even *I Dream of Jeannie*, were bizarre fantasies about outgroups like the Clampetts living by their own code of conduct in the midst of “normal” society.⁴⁴

The Beverly Hillbillies did not avoid the societal unrest of the late 1960s altogether. Numerous episodes alluded to social developments from the student movement and the counterculture (the anti-war movement was conspicuously absent) to the interest in Eastern mysticism and environmentalism (in one episode, the Clampetts travel to Washington to present the President with their \$95 million fortune to combat air pollution). The thrust of these protest movement-related episodes was generally to belittle these efforts as childish fads led by cartoonish radicals—ersatz hillbillies—who were as confused and absurd as the Clampetts themselves.⁴⁵ Yet the tone of these programs was not the outright condemnation of many cultural conservatives and political leaders of the day but rather bemusement at the silliness of such challenges to the status quo, including the burgeoning drug culture. In the episode “Robin Hood and the Sheriff,” for example, a group of stereotypical hippies choose to follow Jethro as their new leader primarily because he and his family seem to know of an exciting new hallucinogen which is, in reality, a “traditional” Southern recipe for crayfish. Their eyes grow wide with anticipation as Granny tells them, “I’m going down to the lake to smoke some crawdads. But first I need a little pot.” Half a decade earlier Granny would have denounced the hippies’ hedonistic lifestyle, but here she is used to derive humor from double entendres for drug culture slang. The episode thus reflects how far the show had moved from its original concepts of culture clash and ethical critique. Whereas the Clampetts once were emblematic of both rustic farce and bedrock American virtue, they now increasingly stood only for the former.⁴⁶

V. “Everything With a Tree”—The Great Purge of 1970-1971

By the end of the 1960s, the “hillbilly vogue” seemingly had reached its end. The country once again lost interest in Appalachia as a “problem region,” the War on Poverty was increasingly billed as a disastrous waste of money and resources, and rural poverty once again faded from public consciousness. Appreciating this trend, Mountain Dew dropped its hillbilly advertising campaign in 1969. On television, the ratings for most rural comedies, *The Beverly Hillbillies* included, fell so significantly that only *Mayberry R.F.D.* (a sequel of *The Andy Griffith Show*) was in the top 10 shows of the 1969-70 season and none remained in the top 25-rated shows by the following year. Nonetheless, rural-based shows remained popular with millions of Americans, and CBS (the home of nearly all rural-based programming) remained the number one network. New CBS president Bob Wood, however, realized that the network was faring poorly with most big city viewers and that the audience for the network’s rural-based shows was now composed almost exclusively of children, the elderly, older blue-collar workers, and rural and small town folks—all told, the least desirable viewer demographics for attracting advertisers increasingly concerned not with a show’s sheer number of viewers but with the composition of its audience. CBS had also gained such a reputation for rural programming that, according to a perhaps apocryphal story Ebsen recounted years later, network head William Paley’s wife was greeted by her friends at a posh New York restaurant as “the wife of the owner of the hillbilly network.” Thus, with Paley’s full backing, Wood made his move beginning in the spring of 1970, purging every rural-based program from the CBS lineup. As Paul Henning recalled *Green Acres*’s regular Pat Buttram’s lament, “they cancelled everything with a tree.” By 1971, CBS had made the “turn toward relevance” and was broadcasting programs featuring young people with “60s values” such as *All in the Family*, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, and, a year later, *M*A*S*H*.⁴⁷

The passing of the Clampetts from the airwaves marked the last explicitly labeled “hillbilly” characters on 20th-century television, but it did not mark the end of the mountaineer persona on television or in the mass media. Indeed, 1972, the year following *The Beverly Hillbillies*’ demise, brought two of the most influential mountaineer characterizations of the postwar era: the television drama *The Waltons* and the film *Deliverance* (based on James Dickey’s best-selling 1971 novel and directed by John Boorman). But whereas *The Beverly Hillbillies* had successfully blended the two halves of the mountaineer/hillbilly mythos, these productions bifurcated them completely. *The Waltons*, yet another highly successful (1972-1980) CBS rural-based program, presented noble, hard-working, Virginia Blue Ridge mountain folk, steeped in traditional rural values and safely ensconced in the Depression era, the last great moment of national mountaineer resonance. In stark contrast, the mountaineers of *Deliverance* are savage sodomizers of the North Georgia wilderness, who terrorize a band of Atlanta rafters. Epitomized by the retarded albino mountain boy whose only form of communication is his masterful playing of an ancient

banjo, Dickey and Boorman's mountain folk are degenerate primitives hopelessly isolated from modernity. As had been true since their inception, both characterizations of the mountaineer, as stalwart democrat and as sexually charged fool or monster, would live on in late-20th-century popular representations of mountain folk, but the mythic unification Henning achieved would not be duplicated.⁴⁸

What can finally be said of the reaction to the televised hillbilly by Southern mountain folk? Unfortunately, little more than sporadic anecdotal evidence exists of contemporary interpretations of these images, both because most hill folk were divorced from avenues of public expression that could reach beyond their immediate community and because editorial directors, apart from aggregate data on viewership and their demographics, rarely considered public reaction to televised images—particularly those they deemed non-controversial—worthy of their time and attention. In 1963, *TV Guide* did recruit an Ozark hill man (labeled a “real hillbilly”) to judge the show (he deemed it “a good, funny pergr'm”) and published a few subsequent letters to the editor including one from an Arkansas reader who defended the “high-camp comedy” of Henning's programs. But, in the main, public reaction in large-circulation magazines and newspapers, was scant.⁴⁹

Opposing published reactions by two prominent Appalachians, however, offer some sense of the diversity of local reaction and the ongoing ambivalence this image inspired. To James Branscome, the Director of the anti-strip-mining organization Save Our Kentucky, the CBS rural comedies *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Green Acres*, and *Hee Haw*, aired back-to-back on Tuesday evenings, were the cultural equivalent of the coal industry's exploitation of the Appalachian land and people, “the most effective effort ever exerted by a nation to belittle, demean, and otherwise destroy a minority people within its boundaries.” Similar portrayals of other minority groups, he continued, would generate “an immediate public outcry.” But no opposition is heard regarding these offensive images because “America agrees: hillbilly ain't beautiful.” Mack Morriss, an eastern Tennessee correspondent and radio commentator, offered a more nuanced interpretation in 1964:

We alternately seem to swing, as a regional group, from one image to another in the eyes of much of the rest of the nation. Sometimes we are a proud, fiercely independent people.... naive perhaps but appealing types, whether we wear a coonskin cap or the slouch hat of a Jed Clampett. Then, again, we find ourselves shorn of the phony glamour and we're not the Beverly Hillbillies but just hillbillies—poor, ignorant, shiftless, degenerate, substandard citizens This swing from one extreme to the other occurs with remarkable regularity ... and is enough to set up a sort of schizophrenia—as a matter of fact, I think it has, in us and in the rest of the country regarding us—which may explain the popularity of the 'Beverly Hillbillies.'⁵⁰

As Morriss realized, *The Beverly Hillbillies*, and to some degree all sitcom mountain folk, resonated with audiences precisely because these shows

captured the dialectical relationship between the noble mountaineer and the farcical and base hillbilly at a time when real mountaineers were much in the news. When, by the end of the 1960s, the mountain people faded from public consciousness and the Clampetts became only caricatures and no longer the descendants of Crockett and Boone, they lost this inherently polyvalent meaning and thus, much of their popularity. But as *Hillbillyland* clearly shows, "hillbilly" has continued to be a vital actor on the American cultural stage throughout the last three decades of the century, long after similar labels and stereotypes for other racial and ethnic groups have become unacceptable. As both a denigrating stereotype and a battlecry of regional and cultural identity, from satirical representations of Presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, to the annual Hillbilly Days Festival in Pikeville, Kentucky, to the new vogue for hillbilly music and nomenclature by such neo-traditionalists as Dwight Yoakam, Marty Stuart, and BR-549, hillbilly imagery and the dual nature of the hillbilly/mountaineer persona that has characterized this cultural identity for over 200 years lives on into the new millenium.

NOTES

1. "Hillbilly," *My Hero* (NBC, 1953); "The Hillbilly Show," *Jack Benny Program* (March 20, 1958, CBS). Benny also used a hillbilly sketch (a clear response to the huge popularity of *The Beverly Hillbillies*) in his show of Oct. 30, 1964. All programs viewed at the Film and Television Archive, University of California, Los Angeles.

2. Other "hillbilly" episodes include "Hillbilly Whiz," *You'll Never Get Rich* (Oct. 1, 1957, CBS), and "Hug that Hillbilly," *Love that Jill* (March 17, 1958, NBC); "Bob Goes Hillbilly," *The Bob Cummings Show* (Jan. 28, 1958, NBC). All programs viewed at Film and Television Archive, University of California, Los Angeles.

3. For Appalachian migration totals, see William Philliber, "Urban Appalachians: Unknown and Unnoticed," in William W. Philliber and Clyde B. McCoy, eds., *The Invisible Minority: Urban Appalachians* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1981), 2; and Jacqueline Jones, *The Dispossessed—America's Underclasses from the Civil War to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 227. The scope of this 1950's exodus is staggering. Fifteen percent of white Kentuckians and West Virginians left their respective states in this decade; in certain coal-dependent counties, the total outmigration reached almost 40 percent. See Jones, *Dispossessed*, 209, 212. On the Appalachian migration, see Jones, chapters 7-8; Philliber and McCoy, *Invisible Minority* and James S. Brown and George A. Hillery, Jr., "The Great Migration, 1940-1960," in Thomas R. Ford, ed., *The Southern Appalachian Region—A Survey* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1962), 54-78. For a recent comparison of the postwar migrations of black and white Southerners, see James N. Gregory, "The Southern Diaspora and the Urban Dispossessed: Demonstrating the Census Public Use Microdata Samples," *Journal of American History* 82:1 (June 1995), 111-34.

4. As Gregory points out, in contrast to the widely shared notion of a people who continue to face endemic poverty, by 1970, Southern-born migrants to the Great Lake states and California lagged only slightly behind other whites in average income and percentage of households below the poverty line. See Gregory, 119-20; "Advertisement in Daily Requests 'No Southerners,'" *Michigan Chronicle* (May 1, 1943), 4, and George Henderson, "Southern Whites: A Neglected Urban Problem," *Journal of Secondary Education* 41:3 (March 1966), 111-14, cited in Jones, *Dispossessed*, 257 (job/restaurant bias); "Okies of the Sixties," *Time* 79 (April 20, 1962), 31 (labels); Clyde B. McCoy and

Virginia McCoy Watkins, "Stereotypes of Appalachian Migrants," in *Invisible Minority*, 21-3; Dale Nouse, "Detroiters Like City Just Fine, Survey Reveals," *Detroit Free Press*, date unknown, 1952, cited in Lewis Killian, *White Southerners* (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 98.

5. James A. Maxwell, "Down from the Hills and Into the Slums," *The Reporter* (Dec. 13, 1956), 27; Maxwell, 28.

6. Albert N. Votaw, "The Hillbillies Invade Chicago," *Harper's* (Feb. 1958), 64-6.

7. Letter from William A. Garyls, *Harper's* (April 1958), 10.

8. "Episode #1" ("Californy Here We Come!"), *The Real McCoys*, p.1, Box TV-539, Collection 081, Television Series Scripts, Arts Library/Special Collections, UCLA.

9. "A Mutual Admiration Society," *TV Guide* (Jan. 23, 1960), 6-7; "The Television Set" (Episode 97), *The Real McCoys* (Dec. 3, 1959), p.3, Box TV-211, Television Series Scripts, Arts Library/Special Collections, UCLA.

10. "Episode #1," 24, "The New Car" (Episode 43), Box TV-539, and "Money in the Bank" (Episode 145), *The Real McCoys*; "A Mutual Admiration Society," *TV Guide* (Jan. 23, 1960), 7; "The Bank Loan" (Episode 55), *The Real McCoys*, p.34, Box TV-210, Television Series Scripts, Arts Library/Special Collections, UCLA.

11. "Little Luke's Education" (Episode 10), *The Real McCoys*, as described in Joel Eisner and David Krinsky, *Television Comedy Series—An Episode Guide to 153 TV Sitcoms in Syndication* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1984), 695; "The Talk of the Town" (Episode 102), *The Real McCoys*, Box TV-211, Television Series Scripts, Arts Library/Special Collections, UCLA; "This is the Real McCoy," *TV Guide* (Aug. 2, 1958), 23; "Back to West Virginny," (Episode 147), *The Real McCoys* (May 23, 1961), Box TV-212, Television Series Scripts, Arts Library/Special Collections, UCLA.

12. "Back to West Virginny" (Episode 147), *The Real McCoys* (May 23, 1961) and "Fly Away Home" (Episode 148), *The Real McCoys* (July 20, 1961), pp. 30-2, both Box TV-212, Television Series Scripts, Arts Library/Special Collections, UCLA. See also Chris J. Magoc's analysis of the latter episode in "The Machine in the Wasteland," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 19:1 (Spring 1991), 27. As the author points out, this and other rural sitcoms also reflected a growing environmental awareness and concern about the ecological costs of industrial capitalism and never-ending economic growth.

13. "Real McCoy," 22; Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh, *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network and Cable TV Shows—1946-Present*, 6th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), 119.

14. Jerry Williamson, *Hillbillyland—What the Movies Did to the Mountains & What the Mountains Did to the Movies* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1995), 57-61; Brooks and Marsh, 1261-4.

15. "The County Nurse" (Episode 56, originally aired March 19, 1962), *The Andy Griffith Show*. Unless otherwise indicated, all descriptions and quotations of these programs come from episodes viewed in syndication on the Turner Broadcasting System cable station (hereafter, TBS); "A Feud is a Feud" (Episode 8, originally aired Dec. 5, 1960), *The Andy Griffith Show*, TBS. In an example of the recycling of hillbilly portrayals as well as roles, one of the feudists was played by Arthur Hunnicutt, who played Ma Kettle's shiftless cousin Sedge in *The Kettles in the Ozarks* of two years earlier, just as Denver Pyle portrayed Briscoe Darling (see below) in the 1960s and then rehashed the role as Uncle Jesse in the *Dukes of Hazzard* of the early 1980s.

16. "Mountain Wedding" (Episode 94, originally aired April 29, 1963), *The Andy Griffith Show*, TBS. On "described" versus "performed" mountain music, I am indebted to Kermit Stephen Smith's unpublished paper, "What it was was Real Mountain Music": The Authentic Treatment of Music in the *Andy Griffith Show*, 12, and to Jerry Williamson for sharing this paper with me. For a list of the Darlings' selections, see Dan Harrison and Bill Habeeb, *Inside Mayberry* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 151-2; "Briscoe Declares for Aunt Bee" (Episode 96, originally aired Oct. 28, 1963), *The Andy Griffith Show*, TBS.

17. "Mountain Wedding"; "Ernest T. Bass Joins the Army" (Episode 99, originally aired Oct. 14, 1963), "My Fair Ernest T. Bass" (Episode 113, originally aired Feb. 3, 1964), "The Education of Ernest T. Bass" (Episode 133, originally aired Oct. 12, 1964), all *The Andy Griffith Show*, TBS.

18. Carl M. Brauer, "Kennedy, Johnson, and the War on Poverty," *Journal of American History* 69:1 (June 1982), 101; Allen Batteau, *The Invention of Appalachia* (Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 1990), 150. On the degree of Kennedy's early interest in Appalachia and poverty, see Brauer, 101-13, Batteau, ch. 8, David Whisnant, *Modernizing the Mountaineer—People, Power, and Planning in Appalachia* (Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1980), 93-4; Ford, ed., *The Southern Appalachian Region—A Survey* (1962); Harry Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1962), and Michael Harrington, *The Other America—Poverty in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1962, rpt. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963); on these books' influence, see Batteau, 153-7; Brauer, 103; Harrington, 24, 186, 196 [page numbers from 1963 ed.].

19. On the failures of the War on Poverty in Appalachia, see Whisnant, *Modernizing*, chapters 4-6, John M. Glen, "The War on Poverty in Appalachia—A Preliminary Report," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 87 (Winter 1989), 40-57. On media coverage of Appalachia in these years, see Batteau, *Invention*, chapters 8-9; Betty Miller Bowler, "'That Ribbon of Social Neglect'—Appalachia and the Media in 1964," *Appalachian Journal* 12:3 (Spring 1985), 239-47.

20. The exact familial relationship between the four lead characters is more complex than most viewers realize. Elly May is widower Jed Clampett's daughter and Granny (whose given name is Daisy Moses) is his mother-in-law. Jethro Bodine is the son of Jed's first cousin Pearl, making Jethro and Elly May second cousins. For simplicity's sake, however, I will refer to them as the Clampetts.

21. Stephen Cox, *The Beverly Hillbillies* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 97-101. Telephone interview with Paul Henning by author, June 3, 1997. Transcript in author's possession; author interview with Henning.

22. Author interview with Henning. Among *The Beverly Hillbillies* storylines directly drawn from *Li'l Abner* were episodes in which Jethro has a twin sister named Jethrine, and one in which Jethro attends elementary school in a ridiculously undersized school boy's uniform.

23. Cox, 3. Henning recounts the same story in his interview with Bob McClaster, Sept. 4, 1997, Archive of American Television, Academy of Television Arts and Sciences; McClaster interview with Henning, Television Series Scripts, Arts Library/Special Collections, UCLA. I am indebted to Andrew Cypiot for transcribing these interviews for me.

24. Mark Alvey notes that by 1963, telefilm independents were responsible for 70 percent of televised programs. See "The Independents: Rethinking the Television Studio System," in Lynn Spigel and Michael Curtin, eds., *The Revolution Wasn't Televised—Sixties Television and Social Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 146; Richard Warren Lewis, "The Golden Hillbillies," *Saturday Evening Post* 236:4 (Feb. 2, 1963), 33; Cox, 4.

25. Lewis, 34; Lewis, 34, italics and capitalization in original; Lewis, 34.

26. Lewis, 34; Brooks and Marsh, 1262-5; Cox, xvii. These records date back to when Nielsen established its current ratings system in 1960; Malcolm Muggeridge, "Why Those Hillbillies are Rampant in Britain," *TV Guide* (March 6, 1965), 26.

27. For arbitron samples for urban markets, see the weekly syndication figures in *Variety*, November 1962 to October 1963. For assessments of the validity of Nielsen ratings, see Martin Mayer, *About Television* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), ch. 2. On underrepresentation of African-American viewers, see Les Brown, *Televi\$ion—The Business Behind the Box* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 60-1. Henning's comments are from McClaster interview, Television Series Scripts, Arts Library/Special Collections, UCLA.

28. "Jethro Goes to School," *The Beverly Hillbillies*, Diamond Entertainment Corporation, videocassette; cited in Arnold Hano, "The G.A.P. Loves the 'Hillbillies,'" *New York Times Magazine* (Nov. 17, 1963), 30; "Review," *Variety* (Oct. 3, 1962), 35.
29. Newton Minow, speech before the 39th annual convention of the National Association of Broadcasters, May 9, 1961, rpt. in Mary Ann Watson, *The Expanding Vista—American Television in the Kennedy Years* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990), 22; Jack Gould, "TV: 'Beverly Hillbillys'[sic]," *New York Times* (Nov. 2, 1962), 63 ("heady"); Hano, "G.A.P.," 30; Lewis, 30; Muriel Davidson, "Fame Arrived in a Gray Wig, Glasses and Army Boots," *TV Guide*, Sept. 7, 1963, 5 (Bob Hope quotation); Davidson, 5; Gould, 63.
30. Henning interview with McClaster, Television Series Scripts, Arts Library/Special Collections, UCLA; Gilbert Seldes, "The Beverly Hillbillies," *TV Guide* (Dec. 15, 1962) rpt. in Jay S. Harris, ed., *TV Guide—the first 25 Years* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 66, 65.
31. Dick Hobson, "The Grandpappy of all Gushers," *TV Guide* (April 24, 1971), 16.
32. "The Hillbillies of Beverly Hills" (Pilot), *The Beverly Hillbillies*, Diamond Entertainment Corporation, videocassette; Lewis, 32.
33. *New York Times* (Oct. 1, 1962); Hano, "G.A.P.," 120; Cox, 194.
34. Robert Escarpit, *The Sociology of Literature*, Ernest Pick, trans., 2nd ed. (London, 1971), 91, cited in Lawrence Levine, "The Folklore of Industrial Society: Popular Culture and Its Audiences," *American Historical Review* 97:5 (Dec. 1992), 1375; Hano, "G.A.P.," 120; Marian Dern, "Viewers Like 'Em, and That's That," *TV Guide* (March 14, 1964), 11; Hano, "G.A.P.," 120.
35. I am indebted to David Farber's analysis in his *The Age of Great Dreams—America in the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 52-4; "The Clampetts Meet Mrs. Drysdale" (Episode 4), *The Beverly Hillbillies*, Diamond Entertainment Corporation, videocassette.
36. Cited in Erik Barnouw, *The Image Empire—A History of Broadcasting in the United States (v. 3—from 1953)* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), 205; *The Beverly Hillbillies*, episode of Oct. 31, 1962, cited in Hano, "G.A.P.," 122; see also David Marc's analysis in *Demographic Vistas—Television in American Culture*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), ch. 2, and Hal Himmelstein, *Television Myth and the American Mind* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 146-50.
37. "The Clampetts Meet Mrs. Drysdale."
38. Paul Henning, "The Beverly Hillbillies" (Pilot), dated Dec. 7, 1961, Collection 081, Box TV-371, Television Series Scripts, Arts Library/Special Collections, UCLA. The line remained unchanged when the show aired. See "The Hillbillies of Beverly Hills," videocassette.
39. Hano, "G.A.P.," 122, 123; Robert Lewis Shayon, "Innocent Jeremiah," *Saturday Review* (Jan. 5, 1963), 32.
40. Shayon, 32; Himmelstein, *Television Myth*, 150. See also Marc's analysis, xvi, 54-8, and Farber, 55.
41. *TV Guide*, March 14 and 21, 1964; "The Country Slicker," *Newsweek* (Dec. 6, 1965), 97; three of the top five programs of 1963 were rural-oriented programs (four if one counts *Bonanza*) and Henning's shows and *Andy Griffith* constituted four of the top 21 programs of 1965. CBS later added country music variety shows like *Hee Haw* (1969-1971) and the *Glen Campbell Goodtime Hour* (1969-1972) to its lineup; all ratings from Brooks and Marsh, 1262-3.
42. Cox, 26-7, 163-8; Glenn Collins, "Ya-hooo! A Marketing Coup," *New York Times* [National Edition] (May 30, 1995), C1, C7; "Abbreviated Mountain Dew Historical Reel, 1966-1996," produced by advertising agency Batton, Barton, Durstine & Osborn, videocassette; "Kissin' Lesson" (Spot 2), Radio Advertising Scripts, 1966 Mountain Dew Bottler catalog. I thank Tom Bené and Jon Harris of Pepsi North America for graciously sharing these items with me.
43. Judith Crist, "The Beverly Hillbillies," *TV Guide* (Aug. 27, 1966), 1.

44. On trends in 1960s television and sitcoms, see John Bryant, "Situation Comedy of the Sixties: The Evolution of a Popular Genre," *Studies in American Humor* 7 (n.s.) (1989), 118-39; Spigel and Curtin, eds., *Revolution*; James Baughman, *The Republic of Mass Culture—Journalism, Filmmaking, and Broadcasting in America since 1941* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1992), 100-7. For contemporary accounts, see Sylvia Moss, "The New Comedy," *Television Quarterly* 4 (Winter 1965), 42-5, and Arnold Hano, "TV's Topmost: This is America?" *New York Times Magazine* (Dec. 26, 1965), 10-11+.

45. These plots matched the conservative views of Irene Ryan and Buddy Ebsen, both of whom supported Ronald Reagan's Presidential candidacy in 1968 and who denounced "hippies" as "the great conformists in the world." See Edith Efron, "American Gothic—on television and off," *TV Guide* (April 20, 1968), 34.

46. "Robin Hood and the Sheriff," *The Beverly Hillbillies*, TBS.

47. Bryant, 133, Brooks and Marsh, 1264-5; so many children watched *The Beverly Hillbillies* that R.J. Reynolds, responding to federal legislation banning tobacco advertisements on programs for which at least 45 percent of the audience was minors, withdrew its sponsorship in 1967. See *New York Times* (May 10, 1967), 60; Buddy Ebsen quoted in the *Los Angeles Times*, cited in "Putting the Clampett on 'Hillbillies,'" *Appalachian Journal* 21:1 (Fall 1993), 22; Henning interview, Television Series Scripts, Arts Library/Special Collections, UCLA; for an overview of this transformation at CBS, see Todd Gitlin, "The Turn Toward Relevance," in *Inside Prime Time* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), ch. 10.

48. For contrasting preliminary assessments of *The Waltons*, see Cleveland Armory, "The Waltons," *TV Guide* (Nov. 18, 1972), 49, and Anna Roiphe, "Ma and Pa and John-Boy in mythic America: *The Waltons*," *New York Times Magazine* (Nov. 18, 1973), 40+. On *Deliverance*, see *Hillbillyland*, ch. 6.

49. Don Richardson, Sr., "Junior Cobb of Three Brothers, Ark., Judges *The Beverly Hillbillies* (He's hill folks, himself)," *TV Guide* (July 6, 1963), 8-9; Jack Dow, *TV Guide* (April 19, 1969), A-1.

50. James G. Branscome, "Annihilating the Hillbilly: The Appalachians' Struggle with America's Institutions" in Will D. Campbell and James Y. Holloway, eds., *The Failure and the Hope—Essays of Southern Churchmen* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), 120-1. Mack Morriss quotation cited in Ronnie Day, "Pride and Poverty: An Impressionistic View of the Family in the Cumberlands of Appalachia" in Robert J. Higgs, Ambrose N. Manning, and Jim Wayne Miller, eds., *Appalachia Inside Out, Volume 2: Culture and Custom* (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1995), 376.